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THREE SERMONS,  
FOR THE  
FESTIVALS AND FASTS  
OF THE  
*CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*  
THE FOURTH EDITION,  
TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A DISCOURSE  
ON THE  
LORD'S DAY,  
OR  
CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

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ST. ALBANS.

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1794.





TO THE  
RIGHT REVEREND  
B E I L B Y,  
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

MY LORD,

YOUR eminent station as a Ruler of the Church, and your excellent example as a member of it, render you, in a signal manner, the object of attention to your Clergy: any attempt on their part to promote the cause of Christianity, may,

A 2                      perhaps,

perhaps, entitle them to assume  
the sanction of your Lordship's  
name, as an argument that their  
labours are directed to a good end:  
the Author of the ensuing Dis-  
courses desires to introduce them  
to the world with that advantage;  
he is equally desirous, at the same  
time, to profess himself to be,

In all duty and respect,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Faithful Servant.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE three first of the following Discourses were designed to furnish some few comprehensive Observations on the holy Seasons. They are grounded on the Judgment of the Church of England in matters where her own wisdom and moderation, and her adherence to antiquity, rather than the example

ample of other reformed Churches,  
have regulated her decisions.

The Discourse on the Lord's Day is now added. Many who are not averse to religious exercises, entertain imperfect notions of the peculiar circumstances of the Christian Sabbath; and discover also too manifest fluctuations of opinion concerning the propriety of amusements, and secular employments, on that day.

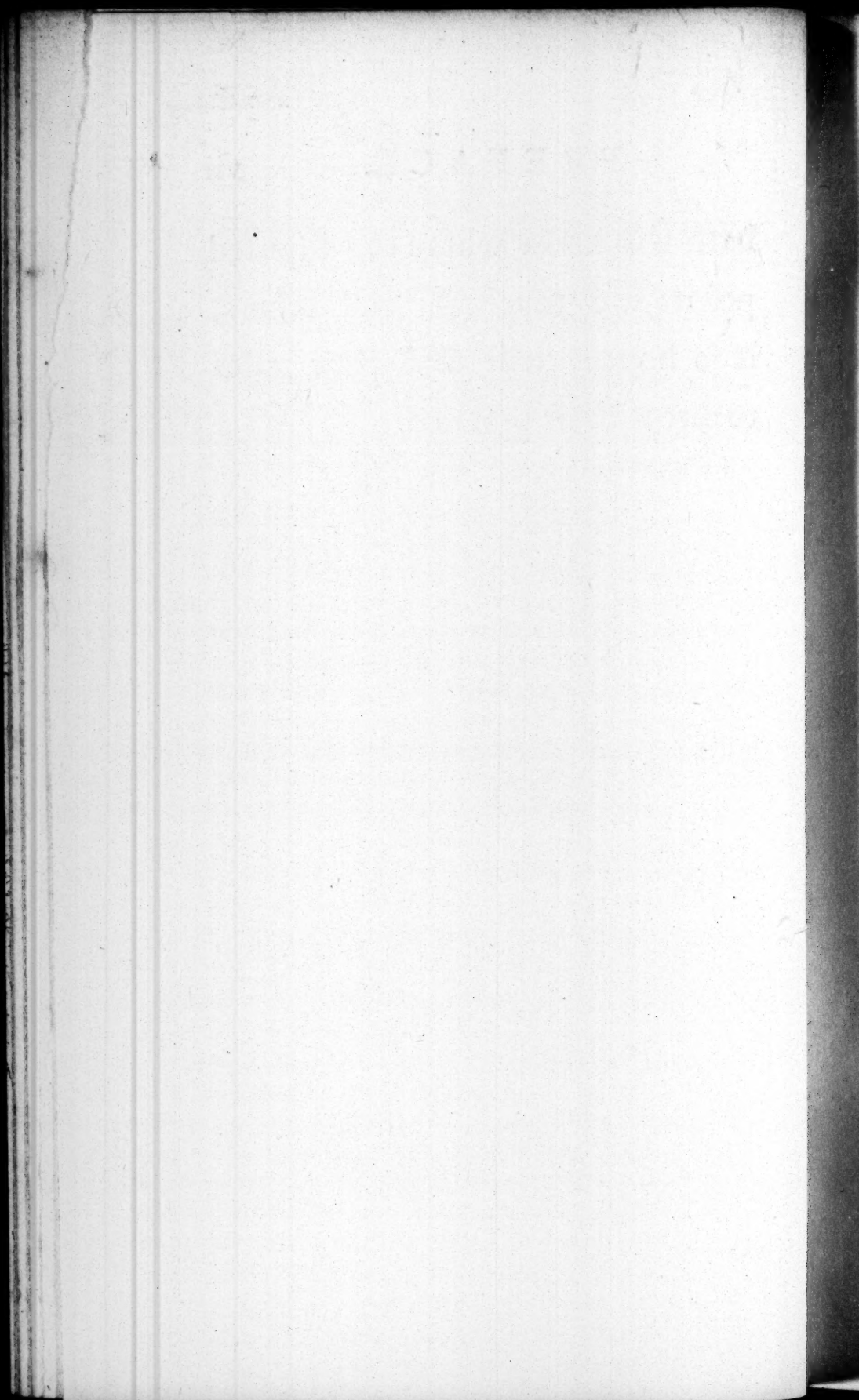
They who have perused the  
controversies concerning the Sab-  
bath



P R E F A C E.

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bath will know where the disputed points are touched : and others, it is hoped, will find clear rules to direct their practice.



A  
S E R M O N

FOR THE  
FESTIVALS of the CHURCH:

Preached at St. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,  
On SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, A. D. 1788,  
Being St. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.





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## II. PETER, Ch. i. v. 16.

*“ For we have not followed cunningly-devised  
“ fables, when we made known unto you the  
“ power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
“ but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.”*

THE Scripture-history becomes the rule of doctrine, and the pattern of practice, chiefly by the well-attested narrative of important facts and actions.

When Moses gathered together the tribes, with the elders and officers of Israel, to give them a final admonition, and to set before them

the motives and the consequences of obedience, he stated to them the records of the days of old, as the ground of all the arguments and lessons which he delivered\*.

When Joshua gave his farewell exhortation to the chosen people, and endeavoured to impress upon their minds a sense of duty and religion, he adopted the same mode, and recapitulated distinctly and particularly the transactions of past ages, deducing his persuasions from the sacred annals and memorable works of ancient time†.

When

\* Deut. xxxii.

† Joshua, xxiv.

When Samuel admonished the people, upon the confirmation of the kingdom to Saul, and upon the conclusion of that glorious theocracy which a stubborn generation had rejected, he pursued the same plan; prefacing his discourse, which was afterwards confirmed by a miracle, with these words: “ Now therefore  
 “ stand still, that I may reason with  
 “ you, before the Lord, of all the  
 “ righteous acts of the Lord, which  
 “ he did to you and to your fa-  
 “ thers:” and concluding it, after he had urged obedience and encouraged repentance, upon the ground of that detail, with this admonition: “ Only

“ fear the Lord, and serve him in  
 “ truth; for consider how great  
 “ things he hath done for you.”

In all the reasonings which the Almighty himself vouchsafed to hold with his people by the mouths of his Prophets, the same facts are recited, and the same great motives set in view: “ Remember,” says he, “ the  
 “ former things of old time, for I  
 “ am God.”\*

The doctrines and precepts of religion were thus enforced under the  
 former

\* Isaiah, xli. Isaiah, xlvi. 9. Jeremiah, ii.  
 See the prophetic books throughout.



former Testament : the method also in the Gospel seems for the most part to be the same.

The Evangelists, who were to propagate religion as well as to record its annals, accomplished both by furnishing a plain and simple narrative of each circumstance and action in the life of our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost bearing witness with them in a signal manner. To publish the several events which God had brought to pass, and to convert the souls of men, made one design with them, and were effected by one method.

When our Lord's Apostles preached, we find them following the same order.

The first preaching of St. Peter, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, was a plain assertion of incontestable facts, of which the Jews themselves had been witnesses, compared with the prophecies of David, and stated in their true import\*. Again, at the gate of the temple, he delivers the same form of doctrine:† and when the angel of the Lord had released that holy Apostle from the prison

\* Acts, ii. 22, &c. † Acts, iii. 13, &c.

prison into which he had been cast for those words, and had said unto him, "Go stand, and speak in the temple the words of this life," we find him, in obedience to this command, rehearsing openly the same signal events\*.

The defence and doctrine of St. Stephen, was a clear recital of the sacred records, recapitulated, and brought down to their final completion in Christ Jesus†.

The preaching of St. Peter to Cornelius and his company, at the calling of the Gentiles, was a brief and com-

\* Acts, v. 30, &c.

† Acts, vii.

compendious narrative of evangelical events\*.

St. Paul, in his preaching in the Synagogue of Antioch, traverses the same field, and pursues the same order with St. Stephen†.

St. John urges the same instances of sacred history ; and, without further arguments, builds the same persuasions upon them‡.

From this agreement it is evident that such a mode of preaching was not casual.

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\* Acts, x. 36, &c.      † Acts, xiii. 16, &c.

‡ I. John, iv. 9, &c.



The contentions and divisions with the Jews and others, introduced discursive arguments. The illustration of many legal types, and their comparison with the substantial benefits of the gospel, occasioned some discussions, and established many points of doctrine very needful for our knowledge and improvement: but still the simple pattern of instruction was the history of Christ; the series of events that ushered in the long-expected Saviour; the circumstances and detail of what he taught, and did, and suffered.

The apostolical Epistles, setting apart the answers given to various questions

questions brought in by opposers,  
 and the rules relating to the govern-  
 ment and discipline of the Church,  
 enumerate the same facts, and urge  
 the same examples ; delivering them  
 as the form of faith, and the stand-  
 ard of obedience. Thus the Apostle  
 writes to the Corinthians : “ I de-  
 “ clare unto you the Gospel which  
 “ I preached unto you, which also  
 “ ye have received, and wherein ye  
 “ stand ; by which also ye are saved,  
 “ if ye keep in memory what I  
 “ preached unto you, unless ye have  
 “ believed in vain : for I delivered  
 “ unto you first of all that which I  
 “ received : how that Christ died  
 “ for our sins, according to the  
 “ Scrip-

" Scriptures ; and that he was bu-  
 " ried ; and that he rose again the  
 " third day, according to the Scrip-  
 " tures ; and that he was seen of  
 " Cephas, then of the twelve ; after  
 " that he was seen of above five  
 " hundred brethren at once, of  
 " whom the greater part remain  
 " unto this present, but some are  
 " fallen asleep : after that he was  
 " seen of James ; then of all the  
 " Apostles ; and last of all, he was  
 " seen of me also."

The conformity of the life and ac-  
 tions of Christ to the prophecies of  
 the Old Testament, formed indeed the  
 fullest demonstration to the Jews of  
 his

his divine commission, and of the truth of what he declared; which discovers further to us how the proving these points comprehended both narrative and argument, and became at once the fittest method of furnishing conviction and instruction. For this end the Apostles were chosen by Christ to be eye-witnesses of his actions, that, by proving afterwards to the world their agreement with the word of prophecy, they might establish the truth of his divine mission and holy revelations.

Having shown that the great truths of religion, and the chief testimonies of the will and providence of God,  
are



are delivered to us historically ; it must be remarked here, that it is not intended, in this statement, to pass by the main foundations of religion—the divine Laws. They are constantly understood to be the chief standard of duty. Whatsoever hath been wrought by the power of the Most High, was wrought to vindicate their credit among men: nor are examples, concerning which we shall proceed to treat, to be regarded any farther than they are conformable to the known rule and fixed authority of God's commandments.

Keeping these remarks in mind, we may proceed to state the advantage of the

the historical method used in Scripture for our instruction. We shall find with what propriety the same plan and order was adopted in the Catholic Creeds of the Church.

St. Paul himself seems to have set the pattern; and in the charge which he gave to Timothy, setting forth a formulary as the sum of what he was to teach, he delivers this epitome of Gospel-history:

“ Great is the mystery of godliness;  
 “ God was manifest in the flesh;  
 “ justified in the spirit; seen of  
 “ angels; preached unto the Gen-  
 “ tiles; believed on in the world;  
 “ received up into glory.” And thus  
 there

there was a model given for succeeding Creeds. Accordingly a plain assertion of the three Persons in the Godhead, and a brief recital of the great events of the Gospel, compose nearly the whole substance of the earliest Creeds. It was the folly and perverseness of gainfayers which rendered explanations and deductions necessary in the Creeds which followed.

The records of Scripture when thus viewed in their simplest sense and application, whilst they withhold us from pursuing abstract reasonings, will supply the best rules of faith and practice. When we read

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the several circumstances of the incarnation of our blessed Lord as related by the Evangelists, we require no long deduction to assure us that he is " God of God." When we trace the narrative of the miracles which he wrought in his own name, we shall be ready with St. Thomas to exclaim " my Lord and my " God ;" and with St. Stephen to address our prayer to him. When we peruse in the same volume the sad recital of his sufferings we shall as readily acknowledge him to be very man, acquainted with grief, and though without sin, subject to infirmity and sorrow. When also the Scripture-history sets forth the visible descent



descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Son whilst the Father proclaims his dignity from heaven, we shall know with certainty that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinct Persons: and then if the several acts in which their divine Power was displayed be duly noticed, the great truth of revealed religion concerning the nature of the Deity will readily appear. In this great Article therefore the plain narrative of the sacred Penmen becomes a sufficient and infallible guide to us.

From the doctrines, let us pass to what is practical in our religion.

The main practice of Christianity, as inculcated by St. Paul, is grounded chiefly upon a conformity to Christ, and resolves into that great exemplar. The Apostle constantly reminds us that the several portions of his history become to us the grounds of imitation, save in such actions as surpassed the power of man, and were proper only to the Son of God. But, even in those acts of Christ which were miraculous, the general circumstances of charity and good-will are held out for us to imitate.

Every action of Christ, as it was full of excellence, so was it designed to be a fund of perpetual graces  
and

and assistances to the children of men.

A faithful recollection of exemplary facts and actions, and a dutiful conformity of conduct to those authentic testimonies, will go far to constitute the substance of a Christian life. The mind without difficulty builds profitable lessons on those well-attested records: a careful remembrance of the fact, and a zealous imitation of the action, form sure measures of religion. The weakness of our apprehension, and the vanity of our affections, are but too apt to mislead us, when we wander from these sources of instruction.

In full agreement with this scheme of faith and duty, appear the piety and wisdom of the blessed Virgin, recorded by St. Luke. To lay up the words of God in the heart, to attend their issue with a perfect resignation, to treasure up the passages of our Redeemer's holy life, described the measure of her faith: and to yield entire obedience to the will of God, composed the sum of her obedience. Whilst she understood not these things perfectly, she stored them in her memory, and considered them in secret; but when the whole order of God's providence in those wonderful events was revealed, it became the duty of every convert to the word



word of truth and salvation to record them in their hearts, and to transcribe them also in their lives.

Our Lord whilst he set forth the rules of good life by his own example, employed also a method of instruction by means of narrative in his parables. They are illustrations of duty, by character and actions. The instances of every virtue which shone forth in the life of our Redeemer, were indeed declared by the Evangelist to have been multiplied beyond the bounds of history ; but there are not wanting in the sacred records, such circumstances of connexion as serve to indicate the progress, and

to knit together the passages of that holy life, with which the benefits and blessings of redemption kept pace, and by which the several parts and measures of the divine commandments are illustrated.

Thus in points of practice, and in the necessary rules of well-doing, the records of our Saviour's faultless conduct, the many instances of lowliness, of mildness and beneficence, which shone therein so plenteously, exhibit a full pattern for our imitation. A steadfast, uniform, and zealous application of that example in our own deportment cannot be too earnestly pursued; in as much as  
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to resemble the Son, is to conform to the will of the Father, the thing for which we pray daily; and to follow the same pattern, is to approach in due degrees to the divine perfections, which is the principal obligation of our nature.

In conformity to this rule of faith and practice, and to this method of propagating and maintaining it, appear the salutary institutions of the Church, which allow to each memorable point of this important history, a celebration and a season vindicated from the common lapse of ordinary days, and appropriated to express and solemn observance.

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The expedience and utility of these consecrated times are eminently visible: they fix each particular of the sacred story with a lively energy upon the mind; they recall the circumstances of them with especial force; they hallow the regular reverfions and periods of the year to distinguished uses of religion.

The Almighty, of old time, in appointing his Sabbaths, made choice of those seasons which, in their return, reflected what had been before tranfacted. The whole consent and usage of mankind have acquiefced in fuch commemorations, by which the deeds of former ages are rehearfed,  
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the annals of antiquity preserved, and  
their influence renewed.

To the life of our Redeemer, the perfect pattern of goodness, the lives and actions of his most distinguished and faithful servants succeed, in a lower order of example. The first is the sole image of perfection, the standard of a faultless piety, the full model of an entire and meritorious obedience. But in many instances the secondary examples are also conspicuous among the records given for our improvement; they are recommended to the faithful in all ages, with the endearments and the cogency of a near fellowship. Although

though Christ has in his goodness allowed to such as fulfil his will the titles of brethren, and of the closest kindred to himself, yet he alone had the elder brother's portion, the unction without measure. In the members there has existed a common condition, a common union of interests, a common need deriving succour from the same source. The example of a fellow-soldier, though less eminent in value and authority than that of the chief captain and first leader, is greatly animating, is near at hand to us, even in our own rank, and by our side.

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The constancy of such holy persons under sufferings of all kinds became as loud a testimony of the truth, as their teaching and their sanctity. The Instruments of malice, who brought so many of them to cruel trials, were but the ministers to their glory; they presented to them the cup of their divine Master, and united those to him in the fellowship of sufferings, who had before lived with him, and followed him in the fellowship of love; they placed crowns upon their brows, which were to glisten with eternal brightness when their own polluted diadems should fall into the dust—should be torn from their heads by the hands of  
private

private treachery or public tumult, or mix an ineffectual splendour with the horrors of some dire disease.

The pious celebration of the memories of Christ's faithful soldiers, constituted a part of the earliest services among Christians. Their tombs were made the places of assembly; not as shrines for adoration; not as altars where another intercessor than the Son of God might be invoked, or other merits pleaded than those of one sufficient Saviour; but as places made dear by the remains of some sufferer in the cause of Christ, or some zealous promoter of his holy religion, the memory of whose virtues  
blossomed



blossomed like the rod of Aaron,  
though the branch was cut off from  
its earthly stock.

The sepulchres of the good and  
pious spake as forcibly to the minds  
of men as their former eloquence,  
and, like the grave of Elisha, which  
restored to life the departed, animated  
many in the cause of truth. The  
holy Brethren did not adorn their  
tombs with the false zeal with which  
the hypocrites among the Jews deco-  
rated the tombs of the Prophets,  
whom they had before persecuted and  
stoned. The bodies of those who  
sealed their testimony with their  
blood, or maintained it through their  
lives

lives with unwearied zeal and diligence, were borne to the grave, as that of St. Stephen was carried forth, with lamentation and attendance; and the surviving witnesses in the cause of truth celebrated their memories, without giving testimony against themselves.

If the use of external objects or representations have occasioned a perversion in the practices of men, yet the pious duty, and the spiritual benefit, are not to be excluded. If the brazen serpent, which Moses deposited in the house of God, as a memorial and token of the divine mercy, became an object of superstition,

stitution, and was therefore broken by the pious hands of Hezekiah ; still the memory of that event, which had been attested by it, did not become less dear ; nor did the recollection of it cease to oblige the consciences, or to bind upon the hearts of men. In like manner, if the tomb and the relick were abused by a superstitious regard, which provoked the wholesome violence of reformation ; still the spiritual part, the call to imitate the illustrious piety, and to celebrate the memories of those in whom the graces of religion shone forth so conspicuously, is not done away. We are not to deny a place in our remembrance and affections, to those

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servants

fervants of the Lord, whose high commission, and singular endowments, whose constant services and faithful labours, have established for them an eminent distinction in the records of the Church.

As the memorials of the miracles which were wrought in Ægypt, and in the wilderness, although not laid up with God's commandments, possessed a place beside the Ark, in like manner, the names and examples of the Saints are now deposited where piety may contemplate them with safety, and may praise God for his former goodness, praying to be continued in that communion which  
com-



comprehends, according to their several conditions, the departed and the living, and in which the will of God is done on earth, as it is in heaven.

To the memory of one of those holy and distinguished persons, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, chosen and accepted by him with peculiar approbation, for his simplicity of heart, and ready faith, our attention is at this time called. His labours in the ministry of the word are justly celebrated; his martyrdom is thought to have been peculiarly cruel. Our Church meddles not in uncertain legends; and though the general accounts of the scene and termination

of his Apostleship are of good credit, we are directed only to pray, that, through the grace of God, that love for the word, and that readiness to publish it, which were manifested in this holy Apostle, may abound in the Church of Christ.

In compliance therefore with the wise and salutary provisions which are made for commemorating first the life and actions of our Lord himself, and then those of his faithful witnesses, let us keep in mind the several instances of their noble and unwearied zeal, that we may shun the folly of those subtle questions which tend to exercise the fancy and  
to

to kindle animosities, rather than to regulate the conscience, or compose the substance of a reasonable service.

The value and importance of each passage in the great work of redemption is set forth in the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures. There the successive glory which distinguished the progress of that work shines with a perpetual splendour. That the mind may be induced to follow the same track, in the same order, the several periods for celebrating those events have been appointed. Thus the very course of time, which is silent and illusive to the careless and ungodly,

has a voice for the confederate, directing them how to turn the sacred pages of the Scripture. Thus as our Redeemer marked each portion of the year with some footstep of his own, his followers are instructed to pursue those sacred vestiges with an uniform and regular attention.

Finally let us trace the solid grounds of a right belief and dutiful deportment in the faithful narrative of those events, and by the steady light of those examples which leave little to imagination; in which the native splendour of divine truth, and the salutary rules of righteousness are demonstrated for our direction. Nor  
will



will such wise and humble resolutions at all confine the course of prudent disquisitions, where opinions shall be made to minister to godliness, but shall not be suffered to become the substitutes for well-doing. The useful aids of learning and of well-directed studies, the collateral proofs and evidences of religion, the just defences of it from its own excellence, the right conclusions from all solid arguments and persuasions, are highly beneficial and expedient; they are most applicable to a dispensation eminently reasonable, and expressly calculated to enlarge the human mind. Such helpful methods of defending and promoting true religion may

serve to illustrate the divine Laws and Revelations, to investigate the order and proportion of God's works and testimonies, to refine and elevate our zeal, and to invigorate our convictions. But the speculations and results of human reason can furnish no addition to the perfect body of divine truth. The sacred records of inspired Historians, the lessons and examples which were written for our instruction and imitation, continue for ever to be the standard of a sound faith, and to supply the rules of good life. The modest hand-maid of Religion, true Philosophy, will not presume to erect any rival theories, where contemplation will employ the

the utmost vigour of her faculties; where a dutiful and studious imitation, prospered by divine aid, will lead to the highest summits of wisdom and holiness of which our present state is capable, and will ensure a fulness of those graces for the time to come.





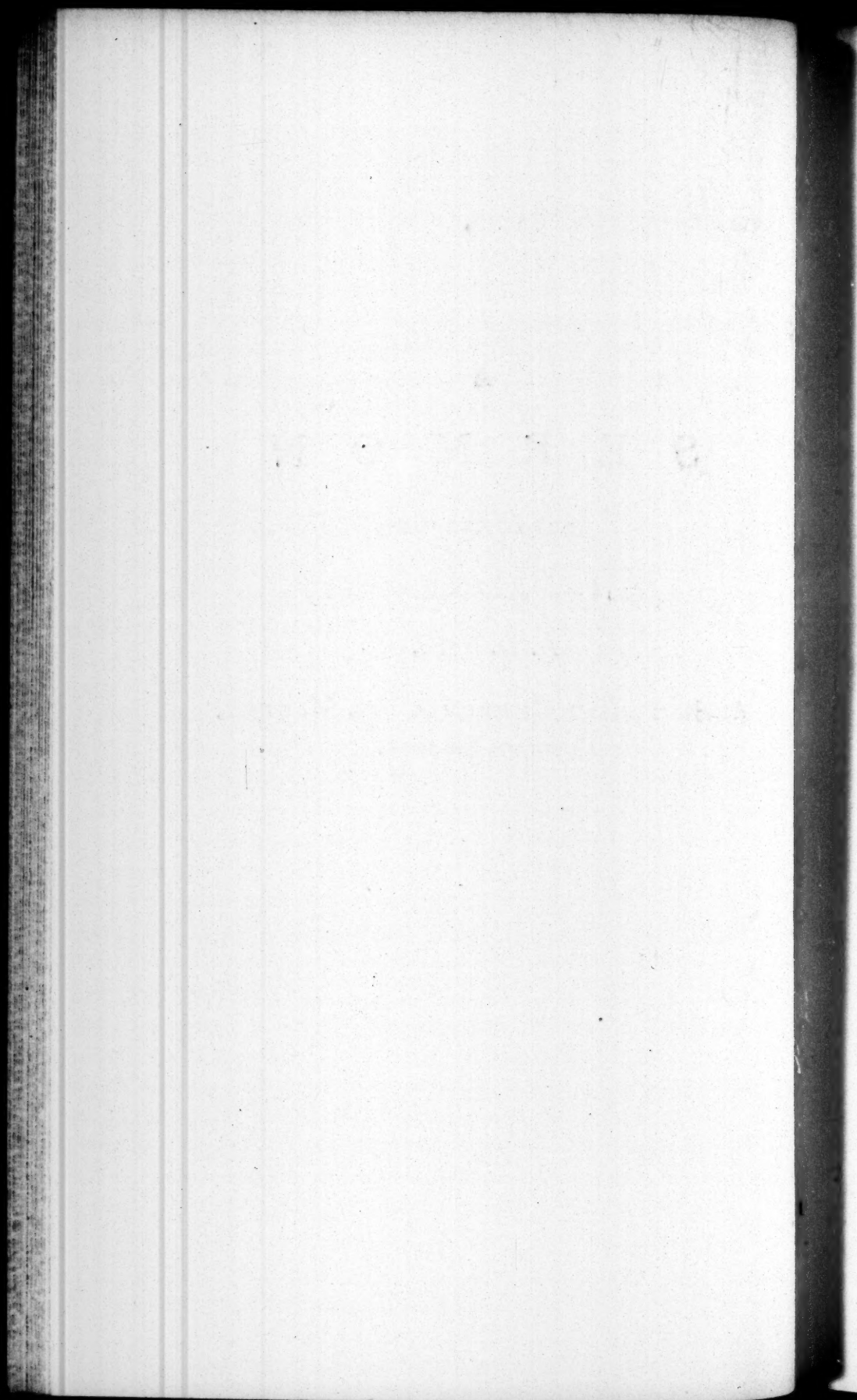
A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED ON

ASH-WEDNESDAY,

A. D. 1789,

At the PARISH CHURCH of ST. MAGNUS,  
LONDON-BRIDGE.



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MATT. xvi. 24.

*“ If any man will come after me, let him deny  
“ himself.”*

NO period of a life which is appointed for probation can admit of sloth. But when a special diligence is exacted, when the watch is doubled at the gates of the Church, to be found deficient in such times of trial will denote a disaffected spirit, and a weak attachment to the main interests of religion.

Before we proceed to set forth the utility and expedience of those rules  
of

of discipline which the Gospel recommends in general terms, and for the exercise of which the Church appoints the stated seasons, it may be necessary to remove some prejudices which have obtained among us, to the detriment of piety and truth.

The great errors which took place concerning those exercises which were so much practised in the first ages of Christianity, were briefly these—the notion of a meritorious quality in the several acts of mortification ; the vain opinion that salvation could be earned by mere severities ; the fond conceit that a proper  
fatis-



satisfaction for Sins committed could be wrought by self-revenge; the doctrine of self-flattery which taught men to place pre-eminence in the practice of what is necessary chiefly by infirmity and imperfection; the false persuasions which led men to imagine that they could establish a credit on their side by such performances.

In considering these instances of misconception or perversion which sprang from ill guided zeal, or were introduced by artful substitution, we should not whilst we regard the gross error, overlook the ground of truth upon which it is built.

The chief perversion lay in putting the means for the end, the aids of discipline for the substance of religion; in exalting the acts of self-denial above their order, and dwelling in them for their own sakes. We may render any good endeavour worthless and deceitful, if we magnify it above the end to which it is ordained. The true doctrine of self-denial is not in the smallest degree affected by these misconceptions. The precepts of Christ and his Apostles, and the rules and ordinances of the Church, stand entirely clear of these abuses.

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Let us then consider the real obligation and utility, first, of self-denial as one branch of the general condition of Christianity, then, of those acts of self-denial which constitute the seasonable discipline enjoined at this time.

Concerning self-denial as it is generally necessary, the precept is distinct and unequivocal, and is delivered by our Lord in person—"If any man  
" will come after me, let him deny  
" himself"—the primary sense of which words might perhaps refer chiefly to the sacrifices which Christians were called upon to make in profession of the faith, during times

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of

of persecution. But, in order to treat of self-denial in its general import, as it is calculated to suppress the growth of evil inclinations, and to promote the love of God, we must assume that application of the precept which the Apostle appears to have made, when he says, “ all things  
 “ are lawful unto me, but all things  
 “ are not expedient.”

By the mode in which the doctrines of self-denial are entertained, they should seem to be the peculiar yoke of religious practice. They rank, indeed, among the special lessons of the Gospel, which is the only dispensation that adapts instruction to the needs of its disciples, whilst  
 it



it holds out a perfect rule of virtue. The law of conscience, and the law of Moses, were sufficient to reprove the sinner. The commission of evil brings with it its own witnesses and its own plagues. Few arguments are necessary to demonstrate the hatefulness of sin, the guilt of disobedience, and the dreadful consequences of iniquity: but to persuade men to look for pleasures in another scene of existence, in preference to present allurements, to expose the insignificance of temporal enjoyments and possessions, when compared with future glories, to show the danger of them, when they fill the mind, and engross the heart, and, in conformity

to these demonstrations, to induce men not to settle their affections upon them, or in many instances, and under many circumstances, to renounce them, required the strong persuasions of divine truth. A very slight consideration will, however, serve to satisfy us, that the usual objects of pursuit among men, whether glory, benefit, or pleasure, whether noble emulations, prudent cares, or vicious passions prompt their efforts, involve some severe conditions. Without self-government and self-denial, nothing excellent can be attained; no virtue can be prosecuted, no useful art acquired, no science mastered, no accomplishment made

made perfect. Without forbearance of many kinds, man would become by turns a base follower of sensual appetites, a tyrant in the exercise of power, a mercenary in the mutual services of society, an invader of all order, and a slave to every gust of passion. Philosophy could teach these things of old, and could induce men to abhor the violence and tumult of unrestrained desires. If the disciples of the heathen schools could suffer, yet without true self-abasement, and choose poverty, yet without that poverty of spirit which the gospel recommends; if they could curb the law of appetite, without those powerful inducements which

are now provided to confirm the rule of reason ; if they could cultivate, by stern and severe methods, a probity which too often terminated in its relation to the common rights and censures of mankind, or which expired within the breast that harboured it, in self-applause ; shall the Christian scholar find difficulties in his lesson, with a meek, patient, and suffering Redeemer for his teacher, and with a deathless palm for his reward ? Probation has at all times been the test of virtue ; and difficulty, the indispensable condition of victory and favour. There is nothing therefore strange in this doctrine, nothing inconsistent with the ordinary practice of  
of



of mankind, or with the common fate of human attainments.

There are, however, peculiar measures of self-denial, proper to the disciples of Christ; measures which are derived from the discoveries of Revelation; which answer to the state of man, as it is represented by the word of God, and which are adapted to the terms and conditions of the Gospel. Let us then proceed to consider the true ground of this salutary exercise.

Christian self-denial rests upon two pillars—Humility and Faith: it grounds its practice upon an estimate

of human weakness, and it leans upon the promises of God.

When men had so far departed from a right knowledge of themselves, that pride could cleave to sorrow and infirmity, the Church of Christ became the only school of humble manners. The examples of abasement meet us at the threshold. The mean repute of Bethlehem, and the circumstances which accompanied the birth of the Messiah, place humility in the first approaches to the Gospel: it salutes us at our entrance, and must abide with us in all our course. The present state of man presents a picture which cannot  
be

be contemplated with exultation or complacency. Whoever will consider that mixture of infirmity and imperfection which appears in the accounts of every man, however honourable in his generation, or high in comparative desert, whoever will regard that bondage to necessities of various sorts, which so often counteracts the best designs, will find ample admonitions to suppress the fallies of presumption: he will perceive sufficient arguments to convince him that we are not yet conquerors, nor established in quiet possession of the crown of life, but subject to temptations, and prone to failings and forgetfulness. A contemplation of this

nature

nature cannot fail to suggest to us the Apostle's exhortation, " Be not " high-minded, but fear." Humility therefore is the ground of prudence and salutary fear ; and the arts of timely caution, self-denial, diligent correction of faults yet recent, habitual restrictions and abatements, should result from such well-founded apprehensions.

Faith comes now to be considered as another ground of self-denial. Faith, by putting us under the conduct of future hopes and fears, encourages us to resist the influence of things present, and calls in the help of self-denial to rule them with a strong



strong hand. The right use, and the true nature of this world are taught by faith ; and the first document in the estimate destroys at once a great proportion of the fallacies of life, by stating our condition under the covenant of Christ to be a pilgrimage, in which we have no continuing city, but “ profess to seek a country.” This state and condition was exhibited in the lives and manners of the Patriarchs, who contented themselves with mansions and possessions as transitory as their own state ; coveting no more in this world than a tent for their abode, a valley for their flock, and a tomb for their remains. Much more will faith remind the  
Christian

Christian traveller, not to prefer the pilgrimage, to the country which is sought ; not to turn the succours and refreshments of the way into obstacles and impediments ; not to live in such habits of improvidence, as if he were already in his own land, and had nothing of the toils and dangers of a journey to make him heedful and considerate. Self-denial therefore springs from faith, and is inseparably coupled with it.

From the grounds of self-denial, under the Gospel, we may pass on to the method of its operation.

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To deny the works and wages of sin, and to serve God, is the plain and indispensable rule of duty: but without some sacrifices, in which even innocent and lawful things may sometimes be involved, it will not be always easy, nor perhaps possible, to discharge the debt of service and obedience which is required of us. The Apostle's maxim therefore takes place, and those things which however lawful, are inexpedient, must be prudently retrenched.

We are bound by strong and clear injunctions, to be temperate in the use of present things, to avoid all  
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folicitude and all delicacy in such matters; to check a blind attachment to them, and to discourage an anxiety for their increase. These appear to be the necessary measures of the rule of duty: but that these general limits may be truly observed, the methods of maintaining due forbearance are expressed in many places, by precepts which instruct us, that, in order to avoid the taint of vice, we must endeavour prudently and seasonably to retrench its opportunities. We are taught, after resolving to refrain from evil, to cut off, as we may be able, its occasions.

We



We have abundant testimony that a spirit of indulgence, even in lawful things, tends perpetually to more dangerous advances. The sensual appetites have naturally no limits, but what they receive from reason, and the law of the mind: neither can ordinary gratifications be admitted to form the main ends of life; nor should they be suffered to gain such ascendancy in our affections, as to make us liable to forget their true nature and intrinsic value. A decided preference must therefore be given to what is of a kind superior to common calls and common appetites, or the best faculties and the noblest properties of man will decline.

cline. Self-denial facilitates that preference, and prevents that declension.

It is evident that things innocent in their own nature, frequently become hurtful by continuance and repetition, and grow imperceptibly from lawful measures to excesses. Our Lord reminds us of temptations, and points out vigilance and prayer as necessary preventives. The force of habit, which attaches us so insensibly to trivial things, can only be hindered from enlarging its influence, by some resolute and seasonable infringement of its power; and by such overt acts of self-denial as may also prove,

prove, from time to time, our readiness to renounce inferior objects, and our contempt of them in comparison of better interests.

It is easy to perceive the danger and the evil consequences of unre-mitted care for present objects. The human mind, though large and comprehensive in its scope, is limited in the application of its faculties: it cannot embrace many things with the same attention. That pursuit which engages our most frequent wishes and endeavours, will give a bias to the heart, which will indispose it for all other things. When some favourite object bears the chief

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sway in our hearts, other interests in vain solicit our attention: they may be more important, but they are less familiar; they may be more necessary, but they are less beloved. From these obvious reasons, it is evident how justly our Redeemer cautions his disciples, not to suffer common concerns or common allurements to rule in their affections; declaring in a peremptory manner, that we cannot serve two masters; and grounding many rules of self-denial upon that position.

This, then, is the sum of our reflections upon this head. We have learned that the treachery of present things



things renders a far stricter limitation necessary than our inclination might point out, or than our choice might decree ; that, to refrain from sin, we are required to reject forbidden things ; but, to avoid danger, we must often decline those which are permitted ; that, in order to fulfil the claims of duty, we must adopt the measures of prudence. In the performance of our services there is also a scale of excellence : and, in order to excel, we must use the arts of improvement.

We have learned also these several methods, in which self-denial operates to good ends. It cuts off the

occasions of offence; it counteracts the first motions and prime overtures of sin; and, by quelling that evil growth, encourages the progress and increase of piety and good affections; it furnishes remedies and incentives; it extends its influences and regards to the past and to the future, as a powerful enemy to all evil acts and inclinations, and as an effectual instrument of holiness.

We may add also, that self-denial becomes a just expression of concern for our common condition, and of sorrow for our past offences, which is the first part of repentance; and that it tends to secure a future amendment,

ment, which is the last and best part of repentance. Such an exercise of self-denial as may serve to indicate a dejected spirit, by which also the body, as the partner and occasion of so many sins, is significantly humbled, is proper to offenders, and has ever been so esteemed and so appointed in the Church of God in all ages, and under all dispensations. The refusing of ordinary gratifications for a while, sets forth in a lively manner a becoming sense that we have been unworthy of them ; it shows a due concern for our frequent misuse of them, and encourages a better apprehension of the value of them for the future. We learn the worth of many blessings

by separation from them for a time. Nor should we forget that such tokens as may give evidence of the sincere repentance of offenders to those who have authority to restore them was enjoined at all times in the Church.

Still let us remember that restraint and self-denial, however proper and expedient to us, and enjoined upon the clearest and most sacred testimony, are but accessaries in the work of true religion, whose service is perfect freedom ; whose whole influence, when duly encouraged, tends to render them less necessary. They are but means to a good end ; they are  
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only useful whilst they promote that end ; and they are worthless and pernicious when they terminate in their own endeavours. If then it be objected to what has been advanced, that true religion is a law of liberty, of free desires, and unfettered zeal ; we may readily admit it. We may grant that the whole influence of religion, if it be duly cherished, will tend to render the aids and works of self-denial less necessary : but we must remark also, that in our present state, he must have much confidence, or little experience, who discards those assistances altogether. We do not understand our own interests, if we desire that any exercise

of faith should be done away for our present ease. We may then admit, and earnestly contend, that the most excellent method which Christianity employs to reclaim the affections, is by revealing noble and transcendent objects: we may grant freely, that it is the knowledge that transient pleasures and worldly acquisitions profit little, and that it is a disregard of them, in comparison of better objects, in which the truest wisdom consists. Nor need we deny, that, where that wisdom shall be attained, the influence of present things will be lessened without violence. Such mortification, if complete, would indeed be without sorrow, and without

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out pain; sin, and vain desires, would droop and expire; and virtue would flourish in full strength and triumph. But whilst our approaches to this perfect measure of divine love are impeded by the necessary converse with things present, and by human frailties and infirmity, self-denial must frequently be called in aid.

We may now proceed to consider the special acts of self-denial which are enjoined from time to time, and the seasons which are appointed for them.

The want of due distinctions have driven men into opposite extremes.  
They

They who confound some special acts of discipline, with the main duty of self-denial, and again confound that duty, with the highest end and perfect Grace of Holiness, fall into superstitions. Others who perhaps give a just statement of the rule of Christianity, but decline the stated acts of self-denial, condemn that as superstitious which is requisite and helpful. The former practise Christianity with a pain and infelicity which must by no means be charged upon that holy law; the latter it is to be feared will scarcely learn to practise Christianity with such integrity as that holy law requires. A state of voluntary and continual pain is far from being



being designed by the mild laws of the Gospel, much less is it the perfection of our service as some seem to have supposed. On the other hand they who will not use the acts of self-denial prudently and seasonably, will probably decline the main duty. Without doubt they who will not deny themselves at all in lawful things, that they may be secured against an undue regard for them, will scarcely attain to those eminent degrees of christian virtue wherein the love of God diminishes the love of sublunary things ; in which elevation of the heart consists the true contempt of the world which was so signally displayed in early ages.

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The very terms of such measures of self-denial as are more especially enjoined at these seasons, the very condition of abstinence from accustomed comforts and indulgence, with whatever acts of forbearance and humiliation may best suit our circumstances or abilities, confine these exercises to certain portions of our lives. Since, therefore, from our nature, which we are not to destroy, but to rectify, they can only be observed at intervals, since also what is left indefinite in our concerns is seldom done at all, from these reasons it is plainly consequent, that such times of abstinence and sorrow may well be ordered by the Church in its wisdom

wisdom for providing things fitting and salutary. When we consider how unapt we are to execute any purpose, unless a time shall be appointed, and a proper season allotted for its accomplishment, when we reflect how easily procrastination counteracts our best designs, and how much indifference in choice inclines us to overlook our most incumbent duties; when we call to mind, that common occupations and pursuits present an unremitted invitation, and are only to be superseded by a positive and clear injunction, we shall find the necessity and expedience of such institutions.

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The present season of humiliation was anciently made use of for putting scandalous offenders to an open penance, and for an earnest suit to God in their behalf: it was a time when the whole Christian Church was humbled, as one man, before the Lord, to supplicate a pardon for offences, with fasting, alms, and resolutions of amendment. If too general defections have prevailed so far as to baffle and obstruct the former discipline; if disorders have outgrown their remedies, or have multiplied so much as to exceed the comprehension of a just authority; the tokens of an humble fear and sorrow are more fitting, more significant, and more



more becoming on the part of all. The dutiful and considerate must, for many reasons become mourners, not merely for their own transgressions or defects, but for those of the thoughtless and obdurate.

It has been a common artifice, to undervalue outward acts and expressions of religion. If we rest in them, they are indeed unprofitable: but to deny their obligation and utility, is to subvert religion in its natural functions, and to set at nought both reason and experience. If David could give a pattern of holy joy to his household by his gestures and his minstrelsey, when the ark of God  
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was brought unto Jerusalem ; and if the trumpet of the Levites could excite the courage of the warriors of Israel ; no less did the silence and the sackcloth of the mourner, the rent apparel and neglected dress, the baldness and dejection of the penitent, invite the sympathy of the servant of God in old times. Ezra, by the public tokens and passionate display of his sorrow and humiliation, brought a whole people to repentance and confession. Where is the reason for condemning any outward act which is at once significant of good desires, and helpful to increase them ?

It

It rests with the considerate to judge whether the neglect of our appointed times of prayer and abstinence through the year, does not contribute above measure to the growth of vice in morals, and of ignorance, indifference, and inconsistency, in all parts of the Christian life: whether this manifest departure from the prime zeal of Christianity, does not tend to withdraw the customary current of our thoughts and actions from the channels of religion, and by plain consequence to enslave us to the dominion of things present.

Some few observations remain for our notice and regard, concerning

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the rules of prudence and discretion, in the use and application of such exercises of self-denial as are more especially enforced at this time.

To make what should be an aid to virtue, a breach of charity toward ourselves or others, would evidently be an error and a snare. We are not now confined to any single act of contrition or abasement: very many are set before us, which age and sickness on the one hand, avocations or necessities on the other, may vary in the instances. It is not a scruple that is intended, but a benefit. They who are impeded in the use of one mean, may apply another. All may unite



unite in decent sorrow, in retirement from amusements, in wholesome resolutions, in a limitation of ordinary pleasures and societies, in such a conduct as is suited to a time of public humiliation and public penance, and in such a deportment as may be calculated to attach a share in the common benefits which may ensue. All may unite in such exercises of punctual prayer and true repentance, as may tend to keep alive a public spirit of religion, to put by public judgments, and to encourage public blessings.

Whatever be the special measures of abstinence and self-affliction, of

confession of sins, of private prayer or public assembly, of self-examination or correction, which are eminently proper to this season, the general expedience of self-denial is not to be forgotten. Where a scrupulous exactness at one time, is followed by a vain licentiousness at others, the folly is reciprocally heightened.

In fine—the law of Christ enjoins us to flee from evil, and to cleave to that which is good: it commands us to be always temperate in the use of present things; it admonishes us not to love them; God claims the heart; it shews in what way, and  
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upon what accounts, the practice of forbearance even from things innocent, becomes frequently expedient; and it teaches by what solemn acts that forbearance must be vindicated and confirmed.

Evil, with the dispositions to it, must be constantly restrained by the common arts of prudence, but not unfrequently by severer recollections. They furnish a discouraging, false, and injurious picture of human life, who are not contented with exposing its vanities and unhappinesses, but who represent its best enjoyments as engines of destruction. It is not however to be dissembled, that the good

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things of this life have the seeds of treachery within them, and therefore must be cautiously and wisely regulated in their application. Experience shows that snares are frequent in our paths, and surprises incident to our maturest resolutions. Rebellious sense, and native weakness, render denials often necessary. Joshua, although the Lord fought on his side, did not subdue the land of Canaan but by many years of conflict; and he never could entirely reduce it. The Philistines still remained, although they were checked and driven to their cities. The pious Israelite was thus excited to continue bold and wary, to preserve his confidence



fidence in God, and to perform his duty; for his border was to be enlarged, if he persevered in his obedience. It has been no less a task of labour with the best among men to overcome the world; a task which can only terminate with life.

Let us then pursue that prudent course which wise and good men, through so many ages, have approved. Let us regard the true image of Religion amidst the varieties of this life: in her garments, some things appear for gracefulness, for decency, and beauty; some, for warfare and defence; some, for glory and distinction; and some, for penitence and

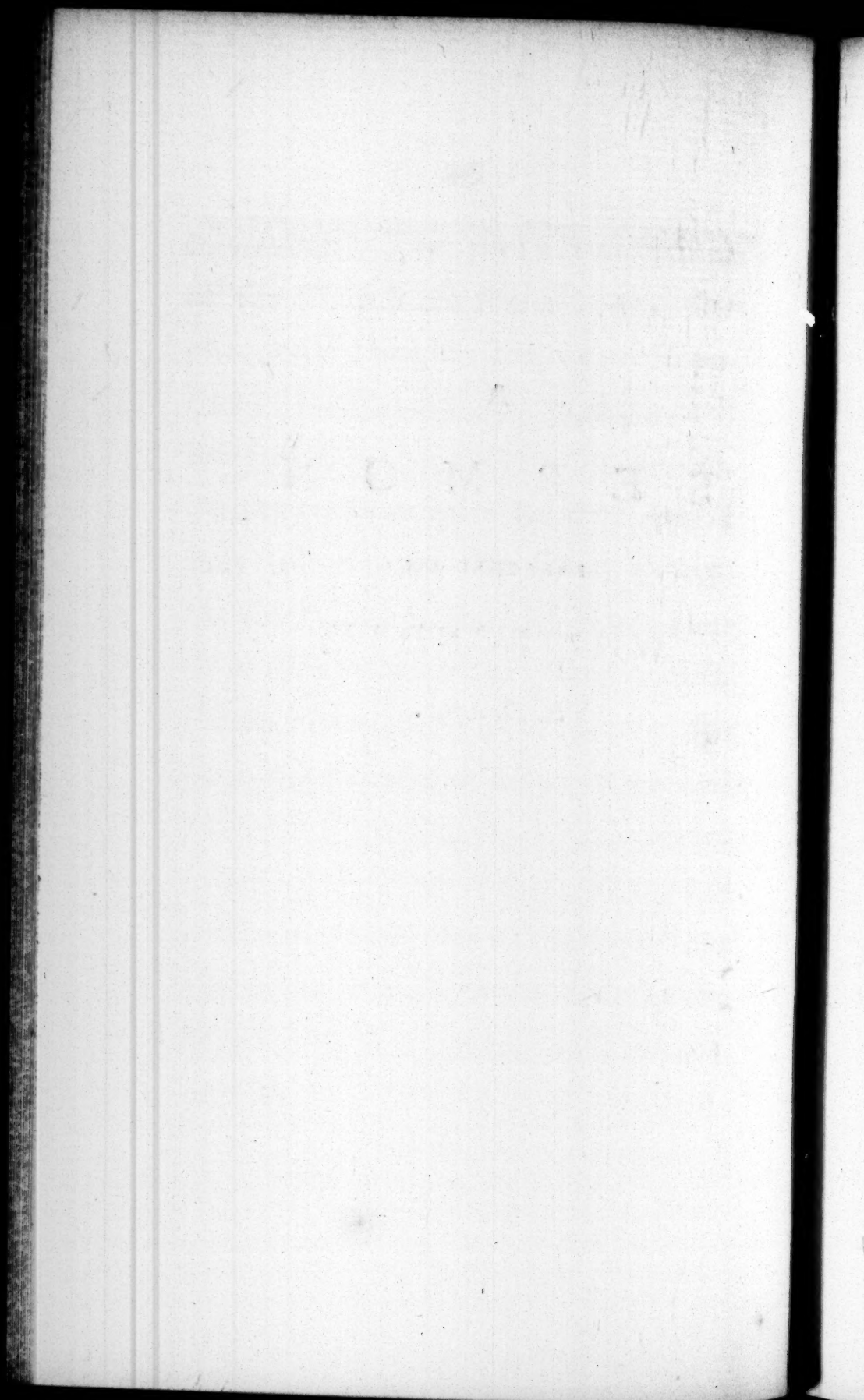
mourning. The pious institutions of the Church are formed upon this chequered draught ; and we are sometimes summoned to rejoice, and sometimes we are enjoined to mourn. The great principles however of an holy life remain the same, though the several exercises and expressions of a pious temper are thus varied. These changeful characters in the garb and services of religion are well adapted to the nature and exigencies of our present state ; nor are they less consistent with the example of our Lord, who at divers times sat at the board of plenty, kept himself retired, or wept.

A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED ON

WHITSUNDAY,

A. D. 1791.





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JOHN, XVI. 22.

*"Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man  
"taketh from you."*

WHEN the people of Israel were enjoined to rejoice before the Lord for the harvest newly gathered in, and to perpetuate also the period in which the law was given, at the same season were the Apostles qualified, by miraculous gifts, to gather in the harvest of the Gentile converts; at the same season also was the Christian law most signally revealed, the new covenant most gloriously ratified, and the promise of abundant joy fulfilled.

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The stated celebration of the holy seasons seems agreeable to the purposes of the divine wisdom; God having accommodated the periods of the principal evangelical revelations to the times on which the solemnities of the Old Law took place.

Among the Jewish people there was a double measure of time—a civil and an ecclesiastical year. The ecclesiastical year was dated, by God's own appointment, from the time of their delivery from Ægypt, whereas the year had before been computed from another month. The civil year was still observed for civil purposes and contracts; but their solemn days,  
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and their religious concerns, were ordered according to that style which began with so signal a dispensation of divine favour as their rescue from the house of bondage.

With equal propriety the Church directs us to dispose our thoughts, and to regulate our study of the great truths of our religion, by the holy seasons: that, as the several events recorded for our instruction succeed in their due order, we may have opportunities and aids for a thankful and particular remembrance of each new advance in the work of our redemption, from its outset to its completion.

The joy which accompanied this period of the Gospel arose from no less a cause than the publication of the Gospel-covenant; the foundation of all our hope, the ground of all our title to eternal life. The donation of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to all its members, became an ample source of gladness.

Let us for a moment estimate the several lessons which the preceding seasons of commemoration in the Church have suggested to us.

In celebrating the incarnation and nativity of our blessed Saviour, the prime accomplishment of God's  
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covenanted promise concerning the seed of the woman has been set before us ; the completion of a long series of prophecies and indications of the divine will has been exhibited ; we have been led further to consider the publication of the messages of Grace and Truth, the manifestation of the everlasting Son of God in the flesh, and the union of the two natures in Christ, that as man he might be capable of suffering for sin, and that as God he might be able to overcome the suffering, and to triumph over death.

The crucifixion, the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, duly commemorated,

memorated, have inculcated to us the dreadful nature of sin, which required so stupendous an atonement. In the sorrows of the Cross we have beheld the ransom paid, the propitiation tendered, the satisfaction infinite in value, and commensurate with the divine justice, fulfilled. We have contemplated those stripes by which we were healed, that blood by which we were cleansed, that redemption which was sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and by which the entire promise concerning the seed of the woman was finally accomplished.

In commemorating the glorious resurrection of our Lord from the  
grave,

grave, and his triumph over the powers of sin and death, we have been reminded that he was faithful who said, " Destroy this temple, " and in three days I will raise it " up ;" which promise being performed, gives us the fullest confidence that he will raise us also at the last day. We have been led to consider, in this great event, the first-fruits and the certain evidence of a resurrection of the body, and the full testimony of the divine nature and commission of our Lord.

By the ascension of Christ into heaven, and by his session at the right hand of God for evermore, commemorated

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morated also in due season, we have been taught to weigh the unspeakable benefits which we obtain by his intercession for us at the throne of grace, where he is our perpetual Advocate and Patron. Upon this assurance we have been encouraged to ground our hope of pardon, and our expectations of succour and support.

By the coming of the Holy Ghost this day commemorated, the present theme of our exultation and thanksgiving, we view the final dispensation of revealed light, the fullness of the Gospel; when what was old in form and nature vanished, and all things became new and spiritual.

This



This then is the concluding festival, the crown and consummation of memorable and distinguished periods in the Church; and where the methods of salvation became full and perfect, there the application of them to mankind began.

We may learn from this slight draught, what illustrations of the great truths of the Gospel, and what topics for enforcing the several articles of the Christian creed, are to be gathered from a right observation of the holy seasons.

The comment which is thus to be collected, is coupled always with cor-

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respondent duties ; it is practical and lively.

It will sufficiently commend this wise economy and distribution of our time, if it shall be found that the chief circumstances of our redemption, the great mysteries of our faith, and the memorable passages of Christ's holy life, are thus illustrated in a stated, orderly, and significant manner ; if the glorious topics and important interests of our common profession are thus brought to mind, and rescued from the chance of oversight, confusion, or irregular commemoration.

We

We may now give our attention to consider the special measures of that joy mentioned generally in the text, which should accompany the present season.

It was fitting that the embassies of mercy should begin in triumph and rejoicing. The holy angels delivered them with hymns, with promises of peace and good will, and with blessings and encouragements.

As the sun "cometh forth of his  
 "chamber like a bridegroom, and  
 "rejoiceth as a giant to run his  
 "race," so was the Gospel to set  
 forward with propitious brightness,

and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

The servants of God of old time who came to give warning to idolatrous and sinful cities, that the measure of their iniquities was full, the holy Prophets, who proclaimed the impending wrath of God, were trained in deserts, and clad in sackcloth. The terror of the vengeance which they denounced, was manifested in their own convictions and appearance. A lamentation, or a piercing cry was the substance of their message. But the messages and publication of the Gospel had a method better suited to its gracious nature.

Beautiful



Beautiful were to be the feet of those who should preach the word of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. The Holy Spirit was to shed a radiance upon their paths. They were to invite, and not to terrify the sons of men ; to win them by intreaty, by promise and persuasion, and not to scatter judgments and reproaches.

The Apostles therefore were not sent forth from the foot of the cross, the place of bitterness and death. Our Lord consigned a charge to the bosom of his beloved disciple at that awful moment ; but he deferred the mandates of the pastoral charge to an hour of fuller glory, of brighter

views, and clearer demonstrations. The witness of the resurrection, and the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, were first to take place, that the messengers of truth might go forth with erected hopes and lively zeal.

A period had constantly been foretold by Christ, when the measure of faith and wisdom should be fulfilled; when they should be able to bear many truths which, till that time should arrive, were too transcendant and too weighty for their apprehension. This final dispensation of the Gospel was the time intended and foretold: the prediction referred  
plainly

plainly to the effusion of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Spirit was the Comforter promised by Christ, to be sent after his departure to the Father. He was the expected guide who was to conduct the company of the faithful, and the holy Apostles in particular, into all truth; to console them for the loss which they had sustained in their Lord's removal from the earth; to give them further proofs and manifestations of the Divine authority of his Gospel; and to bestow upon them such powers as might enable them finally to establish it throughout the world.

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The effect was answerable to the promise. They who fled from him, and were afraid to confess themselves to be his disciples, on a sudden stepped forward as the champions of his Gospel. They who were perpetually falling away from him, who did not understand, or could not relish what he told them concerning himself, they who slept when they should have watched, doubted when they should have believed, and faltered when they should have stood firm, became immediately steadfast, and continued so to the end : their vigilance was roused, their doubts were dissipated, and their faith for ever established. St. Peter, who denied Christ,



Christ, suffered martyrdom for his name. St. Thomas, who discredited the testimony of others, was convinced, and devoted his life to the labours of the Gospel. From that period we behold the witnesses of Christ abounding in all good gifts, teaching with all power and miracles, undismayed by danger, patient under persecution, rejoicing in troubles, and triumphing in death. The cross of Christ was no longer an offence: the carnal blindness of those who had stumbled at it was removed: and thus enlightened and confirmed, they became the witnesses of salvation, and carried forth the testimonies of divine truth in the face of its adversaries.

versaries. Thus were the poor and humble followers of Christ qualified, by the donation of the Holy Spirit, for the most extensive conquests. The great kingdoms of Christendom which we now admire, exhibit but the remnants of their victories.

The peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit at this time to the Apostles, was the gift of tongues, to enlarge their commission to all nations. Of this gift, the cloven fiery tongues, which descended upon them, were significant; intimating the liveliness and ardour, the force and piercing efficacy of their speech. Undoubtedly the gifts and powers of the  
Apostles

Apostles were peculiar to their office, and necessary to the glorious establishment of divine truth throughout diverse countries. But the dispensation of the Holy Spirit is perpetual. The whole economy of the Gospel is spiritual; it consists of spiritual promises and spiritual precepts: it requires and encourages a spiritual service: and in order to that end, directs us to solicit and expect spiritual aids.

It remains now to turn our thoughts more especially to the nature and suitable expressions of that joy which is so eminently proper to  
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all times of festival, and in a signal manner to this holy season.

The promise of the Comforter was given by our Lord, as a remedy for that just and violent affliction which had overwhelmed the Apostles, upon the prospect of the loss which they were to sustain when he should depart from them. When they were told that their Master and Instructor, their Guide and Leader, was to be taken from them, by a sudden and ignominious death; that he, from whom they expected the full recompense for the forfeiture of many things which had been dear to them,

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was to leave them in a short time to the fury of their enemies, and to the scorn and malice of the world; when they were told also, that he who had adopted them into his family, would bequeath to them a legacy of many sufferings, in order that the members of the household might partake the fortunes of the Head; when these sad testimonies filled their hearts with sorrow, their grief was qualified, and their distress abundantly relieved by the glad promise of the Comforter, by whose coming their Lord assured them that their sorrow should be turned into joy.

Christ

Christ gave a further promise to his followers that this joy should not be taken from them; that it should endure through the lapse of years, and through all the vicissitudes of their state of trial, mixing itself with a sovereign efficacy with the appointed sufferings of their calling, and dissipating the sorrows of their pilgrimage. The source therefore of this joy was to be divine: that which was to endure for ever, could have no other origin. What God dispenses, does not feel the declensions of our nature. Wheresoever he, at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore, shall lift up the light of  
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his countenance, there joy must be perpetual: so true is the word of David, that "light is sown for the  
"righteous, and gladness for the  
"upright in heart."

The joy of which we now treat, does not therefore spring from the calm sunshine of a prosperous fortune, or from the fruitions of a plentiful portion of worldly benefits: God may enable us to rejoice in such things, and we shall see further that they are not excluded from the celebrations of an holy joy; but it is never said that they shall not be taken from us. The joy of which the text speaks, arises from the sense

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of pardon, and reconciliation with the Father of Mercies, and from the assurances of divine favour to the penitent through the covenant of Christ. It is a joy which makes a festival on earth, and a triumph in heaven.

To call to mind frequently the promises of the Gospel ; to compare that weight of glory which is laid up in everlasting mansions, with the pressure of present evils when they come upon us ; to encourage in our hearts a love of God, representing him to ourselves not as a task-master, but as clothed with benevolence, as munificent and merciful, are the fit methods



methods for encouraging the increase of this joy in the heart. In order further to confirm that cheerful temper, it is chiefly necessary to be conversant in the active services of our profession, that the current may be kept clear by its constant flow. If we should rejoice in the silent meditation of divine things, we should rejoice also in the exercises of religion, and in the works of duty.

It rests only to pass a few reflections upon the propriety of the outward circumstances of rejoicing in the use of present things, and of their fitness and agreement with the nature and design of an holy joy.

Whether we mourn with those who mourn, or rejoice with those who rejoice, our grief or our rejoicing must be such as are adapted to our nature and condition. The spiritual part is most excellent, and most to be regarded in the nature of man. Our joy then must, in an eminent degree, be spiritual ; it must borrow brightness from a better region, and anticipate those joys which are the allotted portion of the well-doer, and the inheritance of the faithful. But the outward tokens, and customary means, by which men signify their gladness, and invite others to partake of it, are not to be excluded. Let folly and intemperance be banished ;  
 let

let the measures of reason, prudence, and thanksgiving, by which all things become pure, be adopted ; and we may freely sit down for a season in the house of gladness.

God has planted the duties of temperance, and even of self-denial, upon the use of present things : the seasonable limit and forbearance, and the more severe restriction in due time, imply an ordinary use, which is to be regulated, or restrained, for wise and special purposes. We should know both how to want, and how to abound. We may call things present into the service of religion,

without forgetting their nature, or placing our affections on them.

Joy is a fit minister about the altar of the Lord, and is as true a daughter of Religion as any in the whole train of its household. It is the indiscretion of the vicious which too often shortens the hour of gladness to others, and frequently forces sorrow and repentance upon inoffensive cheerfulness, by perverting it to an occasion of excess. The licentious and profligate will neither conform themselves to the steps of sorrow or gladness, according to the measures of religion: they shun the train of  
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the sorrowful, in which their transgressions should include them; and they outstrip the company of those whose joy does not rush into extravagance. Our Lord reproved this wayward humour, comparing it to that of froward children, who are fullen and obdurate under severity, yet incapable of kindness.

As there cannot be a greater breach of all propriety in common life, than for any man to violate the rules and maxims of the house to which he belongs, to rise when others go to rest, to rejoice when some common calamity draws tears from those about him, to mourn and keep apart when

others rejoice or meet together ; so also, in the household of Faith, he that shall sleep when others watch, or keep retired when his brethren assemble in the congregation, or proclaim a fast when the common family holds a day of festival, will commit an open and gross insult toward those with whom he shares the lot of fellowship.

Charity and hospitality should accompany the rejoicing of those who regard the ties and motives of religion. The pleasures of the profligate are ever selfish, and their hospitality both cruel and deceitful.

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Let it then be our aim, at these glad seasons, to cheer the common paths of life and duty with such pleasures as are neither borrowed from the ways of sin, nor to be followed by remorse. The pleasures of the Christian should, at all times, serve as much as possible to the ends of reason and utility.

Finally, let us consider that as the peculiar interest in things to come, which distinguishes the Christian profession, should lift the hearts of its disciples above the reach of immoderate sorrow under any calamity, and should render present sufferings inconsiderable; so also, in times of gladness

gladness and rejoicing, a similar advantage should flow from the same regard to things future. They who rejoice by the measures of the world, cannot exclude the uneasy apprehension which reminds them, that what is enjoyed must be relinquished; but they who rejoice by the measures of the Gospel, will not feel their pleasures damped or diminished, by recollecting that to some few days of joy in this world, more will be added, which will endure for ever.



A  
DISCOURSE  
ON THE  
LORD'S DAY;  
OR,  
CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

DISCOUNT

FOR

RENT

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EXOD. xx. 8.

*“ Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”*

IN the creation of the world God having wrought during six days, blessed the seventh day. He distinguished it as the period of his cessation from that work which he accomplished for his own glory, and he appointed a solemn memorial of his rest to be perpetuated by the separation of one day in seven through the several ages of the world.

In process of time God enjoined the Children of Israel in memory of  
their

their deliverance from the hand of Pharoah, to observe a seventh day of rest or sabbath, that period being once more fixed, and consecrated to religious ends, after the observation of it had been often interrupted, more especially during the Ægyptian bondage.

Such were the special reasons for the ordinance of the Sabbath, with reference to the several æras of its institution.

The general ground of its utility appears in this, that a provision was thus made for a seasonable respite from the business of the world, and



a stated opportunity was furnished for the performance of religious offices.

These motives for the observation of the Sabbath bind, in some sense, to all times. The memorial of the creation concerns all men in all ages, and deserves their punctual regard; the deliverance from Ægypt may remind us of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and therefore this ground remains in substance; and the setting apart a season for the solemn worship and service of God, is manifestly of universal and perpetual obligation.

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Let us consider next what new circumstances affect the observation of the Sabbath under the Gospel.

The christian Sabbath differs from the Jewish rest, because that rest was, in some respects, a matter of ceremony, and a shadow of good things to come, representing, as we learn from the Apostle, a cessation from the works of sin\*. The time also which is to be hallowed to the purposes of public worship and religion, was changed under the Gospel from the last to the first day of the week, because on that day Christ rose from

\* Heb. iv.

the sepulchre. The sacred duties of the Sabbath were, therefore, translated to that season of gladness, which was graced with the distinguished title of the Lord's Day.

The prime objects of devotion and religious duty, to which the Sabbath was originally designed, are much heightened and improved by the memory of Christ's resurrection. Let us state briefly the grounds and traces of this new period as they occur in scripture.

The first day of the week, reckoning from the Jewish Sabbath, but the seventh, if reckoned in succession

to our days of labour, was honoured by Christ's rising from the Grave, by his appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other women, to whom he declared the doctrine of the resurrection \* ; after that, by his appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to whom he preached at large the same truths, breaking bread with them †. On that day he also manifested himself to the disciples assembled at Jerusalem, blessing and instructing them. Again, in the following week, on the same day, he assembled with them, and satisfied St. Thomas, who before had doubted,

\* Matt. xxviii. 9.      † Luke xxiv. 30.

and



and blessed them \*. On the same day, but with an interval of time, at the feast of Pentecost, he sent upon his disciples the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost †. At Troas, St. Paul preached to the disciples, assembled, it is said, expressly on the first day of the week, to break bread ‡. We find that such assemblies were wont to be held at Corinth on this day, the Apostle taking this for granted, and directing the collections to be then made §. He had issued a similar order for the Churches in Galatia ||. Hence this day re-

\* John xx. 26.    † Acts ii.    ‡ Acts xx. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.    || 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

ceived the Title of the Lord's Day : it is so called in express terms by St. John \* ; and the Church, in all times, hath retained that venerable name.

Thus, although we meet with no express mention in the Gospel of the removal of the day, the Jews continuing to observe the last, and the Christians, by degrees, beginning to observe the first day of the week, yet the instances already cited prove the practice.

The notice and respect which the Christians paid, during some con-

\* Rev. i. 10.

fiderable

day be duly separated in memory of that day of rest, which God blessed and sanctified.

These chief particulars may here be summed up concerning the Sabbath: that a certain portion of time was to be separated to the worship of God; this is the moral part of the commandment: that this portion was determined to be one day of rest after six of labour, in memory of God's rest, or ceasing from his work at the creation; this is the part which is positive in the Law: that the Jews, by virtue of a special precept, commemorated their deliverance from bondage by the same ordinance:

fiderable time, to the Jewish Sabbath, does not at all destroy this evidence, or render the inference that the day of Sabbath was gradually changed, less valid. The Christian Church, for awhile, observed, with similar regard, much of the ceremonial law, which was to vanish by degrees. Nor can it be reasonably urged, that the prime object of the institution, the memorial of the seventh day's rest at the creation, was cancelled by the change. It is possible, by any calculation, to determine which is truly the seventh day in succession from the creation; nor would such a determination be material: it is sufficient if a seventh day



ordinance: and that the Christian Church, observing the prime ends of the institution, commemorates also, at the same time, Christ's glorious resurrection.

From these preliminaries we may now turn our attention to the two main things which should characterise the Lord's Day, and distinguish it from all others; and these are, rest and devotion.

The strictness of the Jewish rest was proper and peculiar to the Jews; but the rest which was appropriated from the beginning to the Sabbath, the cessation from ordinary labours

and pursuits, in memory of the seventh day's rest at the Creation, and in order to the special duties of religious worship, is still required.

It may seem indeed to be more necessary to enforce the observation of the Sabbath as a day of devotion, than of rest. Many who abstain from common labours, require to be reminded, that the respite which is furnished from the cares and pursuits of the world, is intended to promote the interests of religion, and to supply a season when the great truths of the life to come may be more nearly viewed. To keep a day of rest, and not to hallow it, would be to hold a  
Sabbath

Sabbath altogether slothful, and irrational. Let us then mark distinctly the peculiar duties and expressions of the mind and conduct, by which these reserves of time should be devoted to religious purposes, and consecrated to the name and memory of our Redeemer.

The celebration of the Lord's day must be peculiar in a double respect; first, as it is an holy Sabbath, and then, as it is a perpetual Festival. We neither concur in practice or opinion with those who celebrate it only as a Sabbath, with a strictness almost judaical, refusing to acknowledge it as the Lord's day, or to call  
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it by that name: nor do we join with those who celebrate it only as a Festival, in honor of Christ's resurrection, departing from the peculiar duties, and rejecting the title of the Sabbath. We celebrate it in virtue of the fourth precept of the Decalogue as an holy Sabbath; and in conformity to the practice and example of the first age of Christianity, we celebrate it as the Lord's day. As a day of Sabbath, it admits not the ordinary engagements of business or amusement. As a day of Festival, all exercises of religious sorrow and humiliation are excluded from it. Serenity and gladness of mind, public worship, private devotion, prayer, instruc-



instruction, every charitable work, and every friendly office, whatever may conduce to acquire, or to dispense the knowledge of divine truth, whatever tends to cherish habits of piety and heedfulness, are eminently proper to the day.—And that cheerful leisure and refreshment, which prudent hospitality encourages, which may lead to useful ends, and by which social amity is strengthened, are not to be reprov'd. We must, however, in these measures of our conduct, be particularly cautious that nothing be allowed which is plainly foreign to the tenor and duties of the day; which would engage the passions, without

without profiting the heart, and in which no sentiment of piety can possibly have place.

If the minds of many cannot be kept up attentively to serious objects, through this short portion of their lives, it will not follow that they may therefore be set at liberty to engage in any common occupation or diversion. If they decline doing what is fit and profitable when the season offers, they must not make their own neglects, and the vacancy occasioned by them, a reason for recurring to employments which would entirely banish every token of reverence

rence and recollection. We do not contend for such a prohibition as bound the Jews, and brought death upon the man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath \*; but we maintain, that the offence against the general design and tenor of a day, which is separated to religious purposes, is manifest in the case of those who pursue the calls of business or diversion. They violate the laws of charity by giving scandal and disturbance to the well-disposed. They deprive many by unnecessary service and attendance, inseparable from

\* Numb. xv. 36.

such irregularities, of that rest to which they are entitled, and of that opportunity for devotion which God hath appointed for them. The loose and idle are also encouraged in their folly by a dissolute example. We must then conclude, that our ordinary business and amusements, which at all times should be kept in due subjection to the great interests of our final hope, should be prevented altogether from encroaching on the season which is allotted for promoting that hope in our hearts. Will it not appear to be a strange perverseness, and an obstinate refusal of the kindness of God, to translate  
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the drudgeries of other days, to that day which has the special privilege of peace and leisure? Will it not indicate a great degeneracy of spirit to persist in bringing the witness of our fall, and the tokens of its punishment, labour and care, into that interval which should restore man to his prime dignity, which should furnish some character of his first freedom and enjoyment of things sublunary. Nor can the use of customary amusements and diversions, though less mean and fordid than laborious works, be vindicated from the same charge of breach of duty, and of departure from the best exercise of rational enjoy-

enjoyment. With some men, mere amusement forms the business of life, and therefore their daily care is never interrupted if it be extended to these hours. Such employments of pleasure and fancy tend, indeed, even more than the mere labour of the hand, to absorb attention; the necessity for restraining them, from time to time, becomes more pressing, in order that the stream of vanity may not enlarge itself for ever, and drown in oblivion every wise and profitable reflection. To these considerations we may add the necessity for establishing clearly and decisively the boundaries of decorum and propriety ;

priety ; since, if some use a little licence, others will take more, and will plead example for their wantonness.

It remains to frame a few reflections in conclusion.

So various are the occupations which our present state supplies ; so much of our time is employed in making provision for the wants, or in procuring the comforts and conveniencies of life, that it will suggest matter of concern to the considerate, when the hours so spent shall be compared with the small portion of our lives which is devoted to the

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worship of God, to the study of his laws, and to the contemplation of such objects as form the chief ends of our being. Since, then, by the goodness of God, and by his indulgence to our wants, the thoughts and actions of men are enlarged to the various engagements of this scene in its business and pursuits, the obligation becomes more cogent for observing, with zeal and heedfulness, the stated calls which summon our attention to sublimer things, and solicit our regard to more important interests.

The frequent celebration of the praises of God, furnishes a direct  
acknow<sup>ed</sup>



acknowledgment of the power and goodness of the Creator; it holds out a continual profession that we are his servants, and that we love his service; it tends to preserve men from infidelity, and from a gross addiction to the world, together with their attendant mischiefs, error and vice. Nor need we hesitate to add, that such exercises of the reasonable faculties, whilst they rank among the best oblations which we can offer, tend to the honour and glory of God.

Let us then encourage the persuasion, that the regular and repeated tenders of our dutiful and sincere

regard will sanctify the whole course and substance of our lives, and will advance us perpetually toward the land of peace and joy. Thus as we pass through the several changes appointed by Providence, we may commend to God the successive measures of our service: hallowing the day which bears the name of our Redeemer, taking an open share in all its duties, transferring the exercise of those duties to our hours of privacy, and manifesting throughout this portion of our lives a demeanour uniformly heedful and consistent. An assurance will arise upon a careful and sincere performance of this part of our duty, that God, who  
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for good purposes has so distinguished and appropriated these returns of time, fixing his sacred image upon them, and drawing them as a tribute to himself, will bless the right use and application of them with peculiar favour.

F I N I S.

